



CATS

NEWSLETTER

The Official Journal of the Capital Area Timex/Sinclair Users Group

Presidential Ramblings

Although CATS suffers serious diminishing membership along with all other Sinclair User Groups, I agree with Vernon's comment that "those that (sic) remain seem more committed to the Sinclair scene". This year we've attracted slightly over 20 members per meeting with more than half coming early to participate in the Hardware/Software Workshop. During the latter all sort of "trouble shooting" takes place along with sharing various program skills. And, from my point of view, the really outstanding aspect of all this is that our many "gurus" patiently share their expertise with those decidedly less knowledgeable - like me!

For those of you who can't (or simply don't) attend, you miss: the opportunity of diagnosing YOUR system's ailments and the possible fix of same; watching the demonstrations of someone's new program or adaptations of old ones; seeing Cliff Watson produce amazing uses for the almost forgotten TS1000;

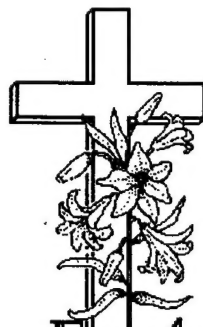
learning from Mark why your attempts to use our BBS went wrong.....and that's just SOME of the "perks" that come with attending a CATS meeting. Descriptions of the formal programs held each month appear elsewhere in the issues of our NL.

Speaking of NL's, we still exchange with many User

System was abused, so you may no longer borrow them for a month.

Hopefully the above "plug" will entice some of you to join us on a 2nd Saturday. We need YOU and YOUR ideas as to how we can keep you among our loyal fans.

Keep in mind that taking your family to Milwaukee the first weekend in June is a good way to support the SMUG Sinclair Fest and for all to enjoy a weekend in a different part of the country.



Easter Wishes

Groups. None are as professionally compiled or as attractive as the one Vernon produces for us, but they do contain a lot of information that should be of interest to you. They are available for your perusal each month and you may take pages of interest to the Library copying machine if you alert Joe that you are so doing. DO NOT PERMANENTLY REMOVE ANY OF THE MATERIAL!!! Unfortunately, the Honor

APRIL MEETING

Spreadsheets on Sinclairs presented by Akinbola Olowofoyeku

"AKIN" is one of the earliest members of what is currently known as CATS. He has been working with spreadsheets since 1984, when VU-CALC on the 2086 first caught his eye. He authored several articles about spreadsheets which have been published in this newsletter. At the April 14 meeting he will be showing different templates

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APRIL MEETING AGENDA

- 11:00 Hardware Workshop
- 1:00 Executive Committee
(In the "Cloakroom")
- 2:00 General Meeting
(Large Meeting Room)
- 2:30 "Spreadsheets on Sinclairs" presented by Akinbola Olowofoyeku
- 4:30 Adjourn

Key Dates

APRIL

- 14 General Meeting
- 15 EASTER
- 27 MAY Newsletter DEADLINE

MAY

- 12 General Meeting

FROM THE EDITOR...

I don't know if it is the weather-2" of snow in Virginia on the 8th of April is a bit strange-but I can't seem to get into the swing of things, as I usually do. I don't think it is the spectre of my annual love letter to the IRS not being done or spring fever. I just don't know what it is but it must be catching, as the submissions by you readers are down to the rock bottom.

For the last few weeks I have been working at relocating my computers from my basement to my study. Did you ever have a project that took on a life of its own? Well this was one of these. The study had some shelving where the computers were to go and yellow baseboards. So we had to paint the trim (then the whole room) and put up wallpaper (which we bought a year ago!). Then refinish the door which was the new computer table and install shelves in the closet for all my computer junk. FINALLY, we relocated the computers and I must say it looks sort of nice. Also, I can look out the window and see what I've been missing all these years while toiling away in the cellar.

Back to the problem at hand, which is the lack of material being generated by the members. I hope that this month is just an aberration rather than a trend. If it is the latter case then I'm going to recommend that we publish the newsletters every two

months rather than monthly. I'm going to watch the volume(?) of articles for the next two months and see what gives. If you have any ideas on this subject, drop me a note at my home, not the CATS box, or put a message on the BBS. I just know we can't keep going on this way.

This month we have the second installment of Tim Swenson's column on the C language, Hank Dickson has written a timely article on surge protection, and Bill Allen has a word search puzzle. The article "Customizing Your QL" came from a newsletter that Eidersoft, the folks that brought out ICE, had in a newsletter several years ago. I have been looking for an opportunity to use it and now I

Please turn to Page 4

Submissions to the newsletter should conform to the following criteria:

Column width no greater than 2 3/8". QL users should submit their articles on microdrive cartridge or floppy disk. TS 1000 or 2068 based articles should be hard copy. All authors should consider sending their articles to the newsletter via the CATS BBS, (301) 588-0579.

Our mailing address is:

CATS
P.O. Box 467
Fairfax Station, VA 22039

hothourri *news around the beltway*

WHAT COMES IN SPRING? WHY, COMPUTER FESTS -- OF COURSE!!

With the advent of Spring, we are not at all surprised to hear another Sinclair Computer Fest is brewing! This one is to blossom the first week in June in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It will be sponsored by the strong user group located there, SMUG (Sinclair Milwaukee User Group). President RUTH FEGLEY will present details about this fest at the March CATS meeting. They will also be repeated in subsequent CATS newsletters. Regarding CATS' own Fest of last year, MICHAEL O'BRIEN, writing in the September issue of Computer Shopper, had these comments:

I spoke with DON WALTERMAN this evening about the recent TS Fest in Washington DC held in May. There were between 200 and 300 people attending, and apparently the Fest had its highs and lows. ZEBRA SYSTEMS unloaded boxfuls of TS products to an eager crowd, as Zebra made its exit from the TS arena after faithfully serving us for such a long time.

There were refurbished TS/2068's on sale for \$60 from JOHNSON COMPUTERS. Johnson purchased about 200 from the Timex repair service, and was able to fix 180 of them for resale. Refurbished TS/1500's went for a mere \$40, while refurbished RGB monitors in open frame sold for \$50 to \$90. One vendor displayed a QL in a lucite box with separate keyboard, while demonstrating a CAD package. Business at the SHARP's booth was brisk as they sold Z88's, QL's and displayed a C-5 (electric vehicle). An unexpected appearance from A+ COMPUTER RESPONSE proved interesting. A+ sold working QL's for \$40, scrap QL's for \$10 and microdrive cartridges and wallets for \$5. A call later placed to A+ after the show disclosed that they had sold absolutely all of their stock at the Fest.

Other items of interest were a demo of the QL interfaced to a 30-meg drive, the 1-meg memory board from Germany networked to the QL and a 30-meg drive, do-it-yourself fix-it kits to make the QL more reliable, digitizers, MSoft dbase demo's, user group displays and a host of worthwhile and well-attended lectures. NIGEL SEARLE spoke on Timex history to a well-attended seminar. While the crowd marvelled at the hourly giveaways, they could also view one user group's display of

every TS computer ever made. Some of the lows of this year's Fest were lack of participation by SNUG (Sinclair North American Users Group), Saturday's swap session, and a few other not so well attended seminars. The bottom line is simply this: The Fest was flawlessly planned and executed by CATS, and they should indeed be proud. It was very well attended and a huge success. Perhaps success these days is measured at the bank, but to an avid TS fan making the annual pilgrimage, the pure awe and splendor of the event shows on our faces. That's how success should be measured. I regret not having the space to individually thank the planners, and those same few dozen well-known names which ALWAYS make these events special. But you know who you are...

We certainly thank Michael O'Brien and Computer Shopper for this appreciative review of AUDREY CURNUTT's achievements as leader of the CATS ComputerFest. We also want to offer the Milwaukee group tons of success in its upcoming adventure! As they say in the computer fest biz: "BREAK A CABLE!!"

Hopefully last month's column perked your interest in C. This month we'll take our first look at the language. C is a structured language similar to Pascal. Many of the same ideas and constructs are used. In C, all variables must be declared before used. The idea of functions encompasses SuperBasic's ideas of procedures and functions. C has FOR, WHILE, and REPEAT UNTIL loops. IF statements are treated the same as in SuperBasic. C also uses begin and end marks the same way that Pascal uses BEGIN and END. C uses and for this. C is a very terse language

C The C Column

by Timothy Swenson

that is not at all as easy to read as English. Where some Pascal programs can almost be read as straight English.

Let's take a look at program 1. This is a short program that will print out the string "Hello World" on the screen.

The /* and */ mark the begin and end of comments. The include statement loads in a standard file that is used by C. Any file that ends in -h is usually a header file that includes things like constant definitions. The heart of the program starts with main. Every C program must have a main function. The compiler starts execution with the function main. After the begin mark () comes the single line of code. Printf is a C library function that prints

data to the screen. C is not very powerful and is made mostly of functions. A lot of necessary functions are in the standard C library. At the end of the program comes the end mark. As is, this program will compile and run (I've tried it). Now that you have a better grasp of the structure of C, next month we'll try a bigger program.

```
/*Program 1. */
#include <stdio-h>
main()
    printf("Hello World\n")
```

Editorial-Continued from page 2
can.

Hank's article made me think, do surge suppressors really work? I got my answer when I was relocating my equipment. One of the terminal strips had a rattle inside-just a loose screw I thought-but anything loose is something that ought to be attended to right away. Well the loose screw was, in fact a varistor and there was a lot of sooty residue on some of the plugs. Must have taken a hit, but I never knew it. Needless to say, I'm a believer. I'm also firmly resolved to unplug my equipment when thunderstorms come even though our underground service is less prone to lightning.

Before closing I'd like to ask you to support our advertisers and also mention that if you have anything to sell, just drop me a line and we'll fit it in.

Well, I wish you Happy IRS Day!

HARDWARE PROJECT: FOR TS 1000, TS 2068, QL

(Inspired by T-S
HORIZONS)

BUILD YOUR OWN SURGE SUPPRESSOR

One of the most overlooked accessories for the low priced home computer is a voltage surge suppressor. Maybe you've been lucky enough to escape damage at home. But how many times have power outages/surges destroyed data on a fixed disk at work?

Looking at catalogs, decent surge protectors start around \$30. With a trip to Radio Shack (Tandy-land) and \$5 you can buy components to install a surge suppressor inside your plain old power strip! If you are not versant in electrical wiring techniques, consult one of CATS' guru's: besides TOM BENT you can always collar MANNIE QUINTERO, STAN GUTTENBERG, or one of their colleagues. The idea is to avoid unpleasant and possibly dangerous electrical shocks! WHAT YOU WILL NEED

Soldering iron, rosin core solder, 3 MOV's (metal oxide varistor's), Radio Shack Part no. 276-570, \$1.59 ea. Screwdriver, pliers or explosives to open up your power strip

WHAT TO DO

Since power strips vary in construction, the following instructions are generic. You will have to pick the best position for the components inside your power strip and go

Please turn to page 5

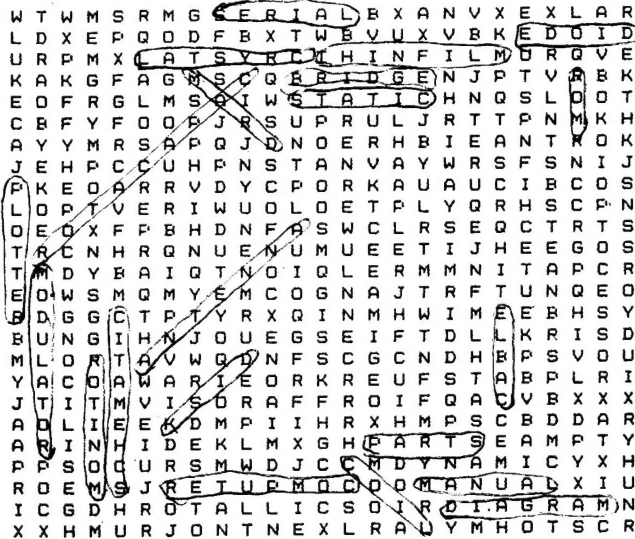
with it.

1. Remove the cover from the back of the power strip.
2. Locate a terminal to which a green (ground) wire is attached.
3. Solder one lead from each of two MOV's to the ground terminal.
4. Solder the other lead from one MOV to a terminal that is attached to a white wire.
5. Solder the lead from the other MOV to a black wire terminal.
6. Solder the remaining MOV to a black wire terminal and a white wire terminal.
7. Carefully cram the three MOV's and everything else back inside the power strip.
8. Replace the back cover of the strip, making sure you don't create a short when the screws are reinserted (lots of luck!).

Your surge-suppressed power strip is now complete. You should now be able to survive a maximum surge voltage of 6000 volts (wow!). Only thing is, you will never know for sure if it's working or if it ever worked in the past!

FIND THOSE E.E. WORDS !!

Here's a Springtime surprise in the form of a word puzzle for all you hardware buffs out there:

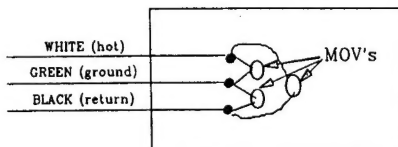


Words in the puzzle:

- | | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| ANTENNA | DRAM | MEMORY | POWER | SILICON |
| BRIDGE | DYNAMIC | MICROWAVE | PRINTER | STATIC |
| CABLE | ENGINEER | MODULATOR | PROCESSOR | TECH |
| CAPACITOR | EPROM | MONITOR | PVC | TEFLON |
| COIL | FLOPPY | MOUSE | RECTIFIER | THICKFILM |
| COMPUTER | GROUND | MYLAR | RESISTOR | THINFILM |
| CRYSTAL | IC | OSCILLATOR | ROM | TOOLS |
| DIAGRAM | INDUCTOR | PARALLEL | SCHEMATIC | TRANSFORMER |
| DIODE | KEYBOARD | PARIS | SCOPE | TRANSISTOR |
| DISK | MANUAL | PLOTTER | SERIAL | WIRE |

Puzzle courtesy of: Bill Allen
ELECTRONICS PLUS
College Park, MD

Surge Protecting Your Power Strip



CUSTOMISING YOUR QL

Here's a very interesting, little known fact about JS and MG ROM QLs (and all Thors too). Included in the ROM of a JS/MG machine is a new keyword called TRA. Now, some people originally thought that this was a long sort after Trace facility. Not so! It's even more fun than a boring old trace command. What it enables you to do is to customise your QL! Yup, using the TRA command we can set up a new table in memory to hold the text definitions for the error commands.

The table is held in memory and starts with the word 4AFB hex or 19195 decimal. There then follows 29 relative pointers to the 29 error messages. Each message consists of a word indicating the length of the message, followed by the ASCII codes for the message itself. Some messages include an end of line character (LF, chr\$(10)), others don't. The start of each message must be word aligned, ie it should start on an even address.

The messages themselves are in the same order as those in the Concepts section of the QL manual. Interestingly, the "F1 Monitor F2 TV, © Sinclair....

etc" message on the copyright screen must also be defined, although there is no way to make use of them. The days and months displayed with the DATE\$ command can also be defined.

The program listing shown is of a sample program to poke

statements, but you can edit them to be just what you want them to be.

Anyway, have fun - you can't do your QL any harm! Don't forget, it only works on a JS or MG ROM QL.

As a matter of interest, the TRA

```

10 RESTORE
20 table=RESPR(1024):pos=table+60
30 POKE W table,19195
40 FOR n=1 TO 29
50 POKE W table+n*2,pos-table
60 READ a$:IF n<22 THEN a$=a$+CHR$(10)
70 IF n<28 THEN POKE W pos,LEN(a$):pos=pos+2
80 FOR j=1 TO LEN(a$):POKE pos,CODE(a$(j)):pos=pos+1
90 IF pos/2<>INT(pos/2) THEN pos=pos+1
100 END FOR n
110 TRA 0,table
120 :
130 DATA "Ok, who pressed BREAK?","Not a valid Job","Whoops! Out of memory!"
140 DATA "Out of range!","The buffer overflowed!","This channel has not been opened!"
150 DATA "Nope! Not found","It's there already!","Being used already!"
160 DATA "Reached the end of the file","Floppy disk is full up!","Bad, dirty, rotten name!"
170 DATA "Xmit error!","No way am I going to format this one!"
180 DATA "Dodgy parameter"
190 DATA "ALERT - CORRUPTED DISK!"
200 DATA "Expression error","Oh no! Overflow!"
210 DATA "Nope - Not yet implemented","You cannae write to that Jimmy!","Ho ho! Syntax error!"
220 DATA "Error in line - *":Sectors on disk"
230 DATA "F1 - Monitor display"&CHR$(10)&"F2 - Television!"
240 DATA " © Eidersoft 1987"
250 DATA "during processing of a WHEN statement","PROCedure stack cleared"
260 DATA "SunMonTueWedThuFriSat"
270 DATA "JanFebMarAprMayJunJulAugSepOctNovDec"

```

the new error messages into RAM and sets the new pointers with the TRA command. The program includes redefined messages in the data

command uses two parameters, the second of which is used to set the new error table pointers. The first, which should always be zero (0) is supposed to be used to point to a table in memory which will act like the Translate options in the Quill printer driver. However, this doesn't work on the JS ROM. Maybe I'll show all you MG ROM owners how it works in a future issue, but that's another story.....!

```

1: "not complete"&chr$(10)
   (see Concepts part of QL manual - Error Handling)
21: "bad line"&chr$(10)
22: "At line "
23: "sectors"&chr$(10)
24: "F1...monitor"&chr$(10)&"F2...TV"&chr$(10)
25: " © 1983 Sinclair Research Ltd"
26: "during WHEN processing"&chr$(10)
27: "PROC/FN cleared"&chr$(10)
28: "SunMonTueWedThuFriSat"
29: "JanFebMarAprMayJunJulAugSepOctNovDec"

```

From Eidersoft's ESS News

THE CLASSIFIEDS

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(AND THOSE WHO WERE THERE!)

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C.A.T.S. will run one free 1/4 page "commercial" ad per one year full (\$18) membership. Noncommercial ads may be submitted at any time. Publication dates for both types will be determined by the Newsletter Editor.

Advertising Rates

Full page \$25; 1/2 page \$15; 1/4 page \$10; 2" x 2 1/2" \$7

April Meeting-Continued from Page 1

which can be used with
spreadsheets in accounting

applications. He will also plot, using the QL.
demonstrate how a spreadsheet
can be processed through
EASEL software to produce a

CATS maintains a gratis exchange of newsletters with approximately 30 Users Groups across the U.S. and Canada. Groups not sending a newsletter to us for six months are automatically taken off the list.

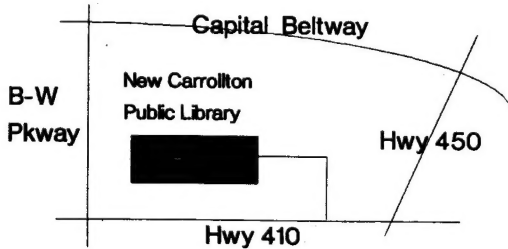
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Executive Board

The Capital Area Timex/Sinclair Users Group is a not-for-profit group devoted to serving the interests of those who own, use, or are interested in the Timex/Sinclair family of computers.

FIRST CLASS MAIL

CATS Newsletter
 P.O. Box 11017
 Takoma Park, MD 20913



The next meeting of CATS will be held on:

- Saturday, April 14, 1990 11:00 AM Hardware Workshop
- 2:00 PM General Meeting

At: New Carrollton Public Library 7414 Riverdale Road (Hwy 410), New Carrollton, MD

IF YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER OF CATS. THIS IS THE ONLY ISSUE YOU WILL RECEIVE

PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESS

Newsletter
 Memberships cost \$15 per year, are good for 12 months, and include all privileges (access to libraries, group buys, etc.). A newsletter only subscription is available for persons living outside the Washington Metro area and is \$12 per year.
Networks
 Timex SIG on CompuServe: Wednesday night, 10:00 PM Eastern time (GO CLUB).
 QZX BBS: (505) 522-7081 FIDO net 15, node 6. East Coast dial (703) 547-4815 FIDO net 18, node 9.
 CATS BBS: (301) 588-0579. 8-N-1. 300/1200 baud. News and general information, 24 hours a day.

Meetings
 Monthly meetings are held from 11:00 AM to 4:30 PM, on the second Saturday of each month, at the New Carrollton Public Library.